

**MEMORIAL**

OF

**THE DELEGATES**

OF THE

**UNITED AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES**

OF

**PRINCE GEORGE, SUSSEX, SURRY, PETERSBURG, BRUNSWICK, DIN-  
WIDDIE, AND ISLE OF WIGHT.**

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**DECEMBER 13, 1820.**

Referred to the Committee on Agriculture.

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**WASHINGTON:**

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**1820.**



*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in  
Congress assembled,*

The petition of the delegates of the United Agricultural Societies of  
Prince George, Sussex, Surry, Petersburg, Brunswick, Dinwiddie,  
and Isle of Wight,

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:

Your petitioners, a portion of the independent agriculturists of Virginia, again present themselves to your honorable houses, respectfully soliciting your attention to the present state of the tariff duties, and your protection against the wild speculations and ruinous schemes of an association denominating themselves the friends of national industry.

We should not again have obtruded our opinions, still less our arguments, on the wisdom and experience of our representatives, but from a conviction that the decision of this question is of vital importance; that, by the establishment of that system of exclusion, developed in the tariff bill presented at your last session, the commercial and agricultural prosperity of the nation would be completely prostrated; the whole frame of our constitution strained, to accommodate this monstrous anomaly in a free government, and, as a necessary consequence, nothing left of our boasted freedom and anticipated greatness, but an empty name.

Though we do not believe that all who support this measure are aware of its consequences, yet we cannot conceal from ourselves, nor would we from our fellow-citizens, that the authors of this project contemplate nothing less than a radical change in our political institutions.

We cannot persuade ourselves that the fabricators of so formidable a machine should not have calculated both its powers and its tendencies, and adjusted both to the views of its projectors. That their views are not solely or principally to the protection of manufactures, we are convinced, by the single fact, that our manufacturers are already more than sufficiently protected. The present tariff duties operate as a bounty of at least twenty-five per cent. in their favor. Freight, insurance, commissions, and the various other expenses of importation, cannot be estimated at less than fifteen per cent. The British manufacturer, the most formidable rival in this, and every other market, is taxed by his own government to the amount of one third of the whole product of his industry, which also operates in favor of our manufacturers, adding 33 1-3 per cent. to the former amount. The extraordinary rise in the value of money in this country must also be taken into account, as it operates as a bounty in fa-

vor of our manufacturers: the increased value here enabling them to procure necessities as well as labor for a smaller sum; while the comparatively low value of money in Europe, compelling the foreign competitor to keep up the price of his goods, enables the American to keep up his prices also, nearly to the former standard.

The aggregate of these bounties will be found considerably upwards of 100 per cent. in favor of our manufacturers.

With these facts before us, we cannot be persuaded that the protection of manufacturers is the real object of the new tariff bill. But, to come at the true design of its authors, we have only to investigate the obvious tendency of the measure; the means will generally discover the end.

The first operation of the prohibitory system will be ruinous to those immediately engaged in foreign commerce, with whom almost every individual directly concerned in any branch of trade will be more or less involved. Other nations will retaliate by excluding our products, as we have excluded theirs. The carrying trade, of which the superiority of our vessels would, under different circumstances, always insure us a valuable portion, must cease. Ship building, after being brought to astonishing perfection, and daily becoming a more lucrative business, will be forgotten, our vessels rot in our harbors, and our seamen emigrate or resort to piracy or smuggling for the want of honest employment; our coasting trade and fisheries will soon be at the mercy of our enemies; for neither can be long protected by a nation without foreign commerce.

The mercantile and agricultural interests are so intimately connected that the ruin of the farmer must follow that of the merchant in no distant succession. The diminution of revenue derived from imports and sale of public lands must be made up by heavy internal taxes, the principal weight falling, as usual, on the agriculturist. The price of almost every article he is obliged to purchase will be increased at the pleasure of the pampered monopolist, who (competition being removed) will be limited in his demands only by the measure of his own cupidity, of the latitude of which we have had a fair opportunity of judging during the late war. The quantity of produce must be reduced to the limits of home consumption, as we can no longer calculate on a market for the usual surplus among nations whose goods we refuse to take in exchange. Without exchange of goods commerce cannot exist. The value of lands, buildings, and stock, will rapidly depreciate, and the owners, once the pride and strength of their country, sink into poverty and insignificance.

While our independent yeomanry are to be thus humbled, while their proud spirits are in training for the yoke, another party, less attached to the soil, and completely dependent on the bounty of government, is to be raised to opulence and power; to be invested with exclusive privileges, more especially that of taxing their fellow-citizens at discretion. And this, as we are told, for the sake of national independence.

It is more easy to see how zealously such men would support even the most obnoxious and unprincipled measures of a government on whose breath their wealth and consequence depend, than how national independence can be promoted by the oppression of a vast majority of the people for the benefit of a small minority.

National independence has always appeared to us something very different from the oppression of the people, and the creation of privileged orders: that this is the end to which the prohibitory system inevitably leads, we have no doubt; that such is the favorite object of its authors, charity may still hesitate to pronounce.

The history of any branch of the forced manufactures of Great Britain exhibits a series of oppressions so extensive in their range, so gross and revolting in their operation, as would, we believe, deter any friend of liberty or justice from repeating the experiment. We collect, also, from the same source, the uncertain issue of attempting to force manufactures, for, with all the characteristic ingenuity, patience, and industry, of her artisans, backed by powers such as a free people can never delegate to their government, or permit them to assume, we find that there are some manufactures which Great Britain has not been able to force. We note the silk manufacture, which, from the revocation of the edict of Nantz to this day, has been unproductive; while millions have been lost to the nation by excluding the silks of France and Italy, and, in return, having their manufactures excluded by these nations. The abortive attempts repeatedly made, since the union of Great Britain and Ireland, to establish the woollen manufacture in the latter country, is worthy of consideration; as immense sums, both of English and Irish capital, have been sunk in the undertaking; and we cannot but observe, that the establishment of the same manufacture in England has been effected at a price no free people would consent to pay.

These facts would induce us to suspect that the only certain results of the system in which we are about to involve ourselves, are, enormous expenses, and gross violation of principle.

To obviate all these difficulties, we are assured that, by the establishment of manufactures, a home market will be obtained for the whole of our produce. As this argument has been so often and so confidently reiterated, it will be necessary to ascertain its value.

If we already supply the whole people of America with as much corn, wheat, and tobacco, as they can consume, and export, besides, a large surplus, by what operation of the new tariff bill is this surplus to be disposed of? We cannot presume that the appetites and capacities of our people will be so much increased by the operation of the shuttle, or the gin, as to work such a miracle. The only solution this difficulty admits of, is the one given by the advocates of the prohibitory system, to wit: that it may be made the interest of the farmer and planter to embark their capitals in manufacturing establishments; that, by thus diminishing the number of cultivators, and consequently of produce, we may get rid of our surplus by not raising it.



Now, we really consider this as one of the most impudent proposals ever made by the most unblushing empiric to a reflecting people. The agriculturists of the United States, an immense majority of the nation, are called on, not only to abandon every prospect of clearing the millions of acres of rich land, in their back countries, but also to abandon a part of that already in cultivation. To consent to have it made their interest to engage in manufactures, by the joint operation of exclusion from market, increased taxes, and manufacturing impositions. In plain English, the hardy, independent sons of our forests and our fields are called on to consent to be starved into weavers and button-makers. But, be it remembered, that, before this conviction of their interest has reached them, few will be found disposed to purchase lands and stock, no longer valuable: if any, it will be for a pittance not sufficient, probably, to pay their debts.

These people would really persuade us that the cultivation of the earth is no species of industry; that all are idlers who neither weave nor spin, and may, of course, be fairly proscribed; their fields turned into deserts, that factories may be established, those precious seminaries of spotless virtue, where the daughters of our ruined farmers may learn industry, simplicity of manners, and purity of mind; and their sons temperance, soberness, and chastity, as practised in the best institutions of Leeds and Manchester.

That the despotic power of driving any class of citizens from the employments of their own choice, and forcing them into others, profitable or unprofitable, congenial or uncongenial, has been delegated to the federal government, we can no more believe, than that the authority to divide our people, like the Hindoos, into casts, has been conveyed, under the form of powers to regulate trade.

After demonstrating the ruinous tendency of the prohibitory system, with respect to the agriculture, commerce, and revenue, of these states, and its entire inconsistency with the spirit of our free institutions, it is scarcely necessary to dwell on more remote consequences; amongst which may be anticipated a regularly organized system of smuggling, introducing in its train fraud, perjury, the exercise of lawless force, swarms of tide-waiters and sycophants, increased governmental expenses, and immense executive patronage.

We cannot restrain the expression of our surprize, that a system, the impolicy of which has been long since demonstrated by the ablest political writers of Europe, and confirmed by the experience of the greatest commercial nations of the world, should, at this day, cost a moment's discussion in America.

England confesses the ruin in which she has been involved by the pursuit of this system, and her inability to extricate herself; while the commerce of Holland has been completely paralyzed by the protection afforded by their king to the manufacturers of his Belgian subjects.

The idea of enriching a country by confining its whole wealth within its own limits is a mere chimera. The only use of wealth,

that we can conceive, is, to enable its possessors to procure the necessities and comforts of life; and, if we can procure these in greater abundance by sending part of our wealth abroad, we increase our happiness in the same proportion, and, in effect, increase our wealth also.

So far from wishing to realize the vision of supplying all our wants by the labor and ingenuity of our own citizens, and thus being enabled to insulate ourselves from the rest of mankind, we would consider such a consummation the heaviest misfortune that could befall us.

That freedom and science can be kept alive amongst a people, only by an extensive intercourse with the rest of the world, a glance at the condition of nations, ancient and modern, clearly establishes. In the whole range of history, we find those nations, only, enlightened, powerful, and free, who have cultivated an extensive foreign intercourse; while those whose jealous policy insulated them from the other nations of the earth have been ignorant and slavish, in proportion to the degree of seclusion they have practised. Of this latter description the Chinese, Persians, and Turks, and, indeed, the whole of the eastern monarchies, afford most deplorable specimens.

Considering the whole system of bounties, monopolies, and protecting duties, as tending, in all its bearings, to interrupt the prosperity, deteriorate the morals, and subvert the liberties of our citizens, we respectfully and earnestly solicit your honorable houses to protect us from those evils, by disembarassing every species of industry from all artificial impediments and restraints, as far as may be consistent with the production of the necessary revenue, and leaving them to the surest of all protection, their own utility, and the interest of those engaged in them.

